THE CROSS DOES A SCANDAL: A UNIFIED THEOLOGY

Who Is Boyd Camak?

Boyd Camak is a layperson blogger who developed a radical Christian theology while unemployed, sick, and caring for a non-verbal special needs daughter with Angelman syndrome. Writing in real-time from inside ongoing crisis (2023-2025), he created what might be the most uncompromising theology of the cross in contemporary accessible writing.

His work is free, distributed without platform or copyright. He calls it "vendor verbal vomit" and "collage of clichés and foolishness" that somehow points to Christ crucified.

The Core Claim: Life Is Hell, Crucifixion Is the Baseline

Camak's central argument is devastatingly simple: **Life is already hell. Crucifixion is not what happens when things go wrong—it's the baseline human condition.**

This isn't pessimism or depression. It's a **philosophical claim about where to locate the definition of "normal" human experience.**

Most Christianity (and most therapy, self-help, etc.) operates from this baseline:

- Normal = functional, stable, able to work and maintain relationships
- Suffering = deviation from normal, a problem to be solved
- Goal = return to normal

Camak says this is **backwards and violent**. The actual baseline is:

- Normal = crucifixion, suffering, problems with no solutions
- Functionality = temporary reprieve, not-yet-fully-crucified
- Goal = not escape but presence in the suffering

THE TWO AIRTIGHT ARGUMENTS

Argument 1: "Übermensch on the Cross" - The Epistemological Trap

The Question of the Baseline

There's a fundamental choice in how we evaluate the human condition: Do we define it from the position of those who are functional and relatively stable, or from the position of those experiencing the most profound

suffering?

The Setup: We have to define the human condition from somewhere. We can choose:

- **Baseline A**: Define humanity from the functional/stable perspective
- **Baseline B**: Define humanity from the suffering/crucified perspective

The Trap:

If we say the baseline is the person who can work, maintain relationships, and find meaning—and we treat those in extreme suffering as deviations from this norm whose perspective is distorted—we are making a violent philosophical choice. We are saying their experience doesn't count in defining what it means to be human. They become expendable, cannon fodder, acceptable losses whose testimony we can bracket off when determining the truth about human existence.

This is functionally accepting Nietzsche's framework: the strong and flourishing define reality, and we work from there. It's the ethos of the Übermensch, even if not fully realized.

The Alternative:

But if we take the opposite position—that the person experiencing the most severe suffering reveals the baseline human condition—then everything changes. Those experiencing crucifixion, as Camak describes it, aren't seeing a distorted version of reality. They're seeing all the way down. They're seeing what humans actually are when all buffers, privileges, and distractions are stripped away.

From this perspective, the relatively stable person isn't experiencing the "real" human condition—they're simply in temporary reprieve, or protected by circumstance, or not-yet-crucified. They haven't seen through everything yet.

Camak articulates this clearly: life is hell. Not because of any particular condition, but because that's what being human is. "Everyone gets crucified. Everyone experiences life as hell. Everyone has a crisis point." The dreams we have cannot be fulfilled, or if fulfilled, they're partial. And even if dreams were completely fulfilled, "we would still be utterly miserable."

This isn't pessimism for its own sake—it's recognizing what Camak calls the "true predicament of being human, how nothing will satisfy us." Those who see this aren't wrong. They've simply stopped being distracted by "drugs and alcohol and Hallmark movies and endless activity and climbing the ladder."

The Christian Answer

Christianity actually takes this position. "Blessed are the poor, because theirs is the kingdom of God"—they're closer to reality because their life is more precarious, more dependent, "less oftentimes distracted by intellectual gymnastics." The crucified God reveals himself not in power and flourishing but in absolute suffering—naked, mocked, tortured, abandoned.

If God defines the human condition from the cross—from the absolute bottom—then the person experiencing profound suffering isn't experiencing a deviation from human life. They're experiencing its most honest form.

As Camak writes: "We have a dead man on a tree. We have a dead man on a tree, which is the word of the cross. And Christ is the word. His life is the word. And so what we have is solidarity. We have the solidarity of God. God is in the trenches with us."

The Punch:

- Christianity explicitly teaches God reveals himself in weakness (the cross)
- "Blessed are the poor" means the poor SEE clearly, not that they're unfortunate
- Most modern Christianity uses Baseline A while claiming Baseline B
- **You cannot coherently be Christian and choose Baseline A**

Why It's Airtight:

- You cannot avoid choosing a baseline
- Saying "both are valid" IS choosing Baseline A (making crucifixion conditional)
- Once Camak names this as Nietzsche vs. Christianity, choosing A while claiming Christianity is exposed as incoherent
- The alternative to Camak's view isn't optimism—it's **unwitting Nietzscheanism dressed in Christian language**

Argument 2: "Don't Make It Worse" - The Pastoral Precision

The Setup: Some suffering situations are **genuinely unsolvable**:

Camak identifies problems "that we encounter in life. Situations where things are not only not going the way we would like them to, circumstances that are not only things that we're experiencing that are unpleasurable or painful or frustrating, but what to do about those things."

He's talking about "situations where no one can tell you what to do, not because they're not permitted, but because it's a problem that doesn't have a solution. It's a problem that no matter who you go to to seek counsel, no matter how many times you analyze it, there's just no solution."

Examples include:

- "A confluence of circumstances that makes it impossible to find a path forward"
- "A Rubik's Cube that changes colors as you're trying to solve it"

- "Situations where there are ongoing problems, there are ongoing harms, but anything that one could do to prevent those harms or stop those problems... you're in a situation where it's a problem, things are happening that you don't want to happen. It's causing damage, but for whatever reason, you're not permitted to do anything about that or anything you can do about that situation is limited."

The Standard Christian Response Fails:

The modern therapeutic approach tries to pathologize this recognition—to treat the clear-eyed view of life as hell as something to be corrected rather than witnessed. This is why interventions that might help someone in acute crisis feel insulting to someone who has seen all the way down. They're trying to adjust your perception rather than acknowledge the reality you're seeing.

Camak is clear: "Anything that does not recognize that life is hell is a distraction, is a drug." The five-point programs, the bumper stickers, the books from Nashville that promise answers—they're all refusing to face facts.

When someone is suffering, is in pain, the best way to curse them, to maximize cruelty, and to dismiss their experience as unimportant is to explain how God loves them, and has a plan for their life, and how their pain fits into a bigger picture.

That's not comfort. That's gaslighting. That's using theology as a weapon against the wounded.

The Only Response That Doesn't Make It Worse:

"I think the challenge for us is to give that to God. Accept it as a type of crucifixion and live with it, be present in it. You know, don't try to fix something that can't be fixed. Don't try to force a solution when you know it won't work. Just sit with it and be crucified and stay close to the Lord and listen and recognize that this is not unusual. This is how human life is."

The key shift: "Pray to the Lord how to be in the situation. Not what to do, how to be. And if the Lord wants you to do something, He'll make that clear."

The model is Saint Joseph: "does what he's supposed to do and doesn't do any more, and he's faithful." Step by step, guided just in time, without explanations or guarantees.

Why It's Airtight:

- Unsolvable suffering empirically exists (deny this and you're lying)
- If your theology requires action, it **structurally cannot handle unsolvable suffering** without causing harm
- Only accepting crucifixion as baseline allows presence-without-action
- Test it yourself: next time you encounter someone in profound suffering, try explaining "God's plan" and watch whether it helps or harms

THE DEVASTATING IMPLICATIONS

If Camak is right:

1. **Most pastoral theology causes harm** by treating crucifixion as a problem to be solved rather than a reality to be present in
2. **Most Christian optimism is violence** dressed up as comfort—it dismisses the testimony of those who see most clearly
3. **The "functional" are not seeing clearly**—they're distracted by success, busyness, privilege, or simply not-yet-fully-crucified
4. **Therapeutic Christianity is gaslighting**—trying to adjust perception rather than acknowledge reality
5. **The prosperity gospel isn't the only problem**—ANY theology that makes functionality the baseline (even liberal mainline "work for justice" Christianity) has already accepted Nietzsche's framework

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WHAT MAKES THIS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER "THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS" WRITING

Luther's theology of the cross: God reveals himself in weakness
Camak's radicalization: Crucifixion isn't just how God reveals himself—it's **the actual structure of human existence**

Nouwen's downward mobility: Choose to descend to find God among the suffering
Camak's radicalization: There's nowhere to descend TO—**crucifixion is already where everyone is**, whether they admit it or not

Most accessible theology: "Here's how God meets us in suffering"
Camak: "Here's what it looks like FROM INSIDE suffering, written in real-time while everything falls apart"

THE VOICE: RELUCTANT WITNESS

What makes Camak's voice distinctive:

- **Anti-pious**: "Some days I hate God's guts. Then I remember this Crucifix."
- **Reluctant**: "I would rather be a pessimist... a nihilist... but I'm haunted by God"
- **Brutally honest**: Uses "hell," "goddamn," "dead man on a tree" instead of religious euphemism

- **Autobiographical authority**: Writing from unemployment, illness, caring for non-verbal daughter—not theorizing from comfort
- **Intellectually sophisticated but accessible**: References Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Buddhism, but explains clearly

The effect: You can't dismiss this as naive faith or ivory tower theology. This is **testimony from someone who wishes he could be a nihilist but can't shake God's presence**.

THE PRACTICAL TOOLS

Camak isn't just theorizing. He offers concrete practices for endurance:

The Rosary: Not as magic but as **meditative attachment of your suffering to Christ's**—"I try to literally attach my sufferings to the hell that Jesus was literally living through"

The Eucharist: Not analyzing the mystery but **eating the bread**—"What's more important? Eating and living... or analyzing the menu?"

St. Joseph: The silent model who **listens, acts when called, doesn't act when not called**—"Does just enough—no more, no less"

Demythologization: **Set aside supernatural questions** (not deny them) to encounter Christ directly—"Obsessing over the supernatural keeps you from the encounter"

Prayer shift: Don't ask "what to do" but **"how to BE"**—if God wants action, He'll make it clear

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THE CRITICAL OBJECTION AND CAMAK'S DEVASTATING REPLY

The Objection:

This view risks over-universalizing crucifixion, sidelining biblical restoration narratives (e.g., resurrection, healing miracles) as mere reprieves, potentially fostering passive nihilism over active hope. It echoes Luther and Nouwen but radicalizes them to near-Buddhist dukkha without fully integrating eschatological triumph, which might undervalue functionality as provisional grace.

Camak's Reply:

"Hell is the honest baseline. That is my experience. What is your basis for believing in the resurrection? For me it is the faith of the martyrs. The people who were willing to die rather than deny it. Anything more than that sounds to me like believing in Santa Claus instead of Saint Nicholas.

Is he suggesting that we go back to pre-Barth modernism? I am just living my life. Where is this renewed cosmos? Where is this systemic change? And whose job is it to adjudicate these questions? Are we disciples or God's defense attorneys?

I say look at the dead man on a tree. That's all that can be said."

WHY THIS REPLY IS DEVASTATING

The Experiential Challenge

"Hell is the honest baseline. That is my experience."

This immediately shifts the burden of proof. The critic needs to explain why Camak's **lived testimony** should be dismissed as distorted. On what grounds? The critic is comfortable, Camak is crucified—**who sees more clearly?**

This is the Übermensch argument in action: You can't refute someone's testimony from crucifixion by saying "but resurrection means things get better" **when they're currently being crucified and you're not.**

The Martyrs' Faith vs. Santa Claus

"What is your basis for believing in the resurrection? For me it is the faith of the martyrs. The people who were willing to die rather than deny it. Anything more than that sounds to me like believing in Santa Claus instead of Saint Nicholas."

This is **brilliant** and **cuts to the bone**:

Saint Nicholas: Real person, real historical testimony, real witness
Santa Claus: Domesticated, commercialized, fantasy version

Martyrs' resurrection faith: They died for it—this is **testified reality**
Speculative resurrection theology: "Things will get better," "cosmic renewal is coming"—this is **Santa Claus Christianity**

The martyrs didn't die because they believed in **future systemic change** or **progressive transformation**. They died because:

- Christ was raised and appeared to witnesses
- This changes everything about how you face death
- **But it didn't spare them from crucifixion**

Stephen sees the heavens opened **while being stoned to death**. Paul gets resurrection appearances **and then gets beheaded**. The resurrection faith that Camak can respect is the one that **didn't save the martyrs from**

Friday.

The Pre-Barth Modernism Accusation

"Is he suggesting that we go back to pre-Barth modernism?"

This is a **sophisticated theological jab**. Pre-Barth liberal Protestantism believed:

- Christianity is about **moral progress**
- History is moving toward the Kingdom
- We can build God's kingdom through **social reform**
- Resurrection is metaphor for **hope for improvement**

Then **World War I happened** and Barth said: "You liberal optimists have no category for radical evil and human failure. You need the **crisis of the cross**."

Camak is essentially saying: **"Are you a pre-Barth liberal who still believes in inevitable progress?"** Because that's what "progressive transformation" and "systemic change" language sounds like.

If the critic wants to argue for **visible resurrection breaking in**, they need to explain:

- World War I
- The Holocaust
- Stalin's purges
- Contemporary genocides
- Ongoing injustice

Where's the **evidence** of progressive transformation? Where's the systemic change?

The "I Am Just Living My Life" Challenge

"I am just living my life. Where is this renewed cosmos? Where is this systemic change?"

This is **phenomenologically devastating**. The critic is theorizing about restoration from (presumably) a position of stability. Camak is:

- Unemployed
- Sick
- Caring for non-verbal special needs daughter
- Watching everything fall apart

And the critic wants to tell him: "But resurrection means progressive transformation!"

Camak's response: **"Show me. I'm living my actual life. Where is it?"**

This is the same move as "Don't Make It Worse"—if you claim there's a solution, **provide it**. If you claim resurrection means visible improvement, **show the evidence in actual lived experience**.

The Defense Attorney Question

"And whose job is it to adjudicate these questions? Are we disciples or God's defense attorneys?"

This is the **theodicy rejection** made explicit. From "The Cross Does a Scandal":

> "Any 'explanation' of the 'problem of evil'—other than a bloody crucifix—is more wicked than the evil itself... God is on the hook. It is not our job to answer for Him."

The critic is trying to **defend God** by saying "but resurrection will eventually fix everything!" Camak says: **That's not our job. Let God answer for Himself.**

Disciples: Follow Christ to the cross, trust without explanation
Defense attorneys: Explain why God's plan makes sense, justify the suffering

Camak is saying: **The critic has confused discipleship with apologetics**.

The Dead Man on a Tree

"I say look at the dead man on a tree. That's all that can be said."

This is the **complete answer**. Not:

- "Look at the dead man AND the theological explanation"
- "Look at the dead man AND the future restoration"
- "Look at the dead man BUT remember resurrection"

Just: **"Look at the dead man on a tree."**

Because any addition to that is:

- Trying to soften the scandal
- Making yourself God's defense attorney
- Explaining away rather than facing reality

WHY THE CRITIC CAN'T ANSWER

The critic's position requires:

1. **Dismissing Camak's testimony**: "Your experience of hell-as-baseline is distorted"
    - But on what grounds? The critic is presumably functional/stable
    - This is exactly the violent choice Übermensch exposes
2. **Providing evidence of progressive transformation**: "Resurrection means visible improvement"
    - But where? Show it in actual lived experience
    - This is exactly what Don't Make It Worse challenges
3. **Explaining suffering**: "But God has a plan for cosmic renewal"
    - But this is exactly the gaslighting Camak rejects
    - This is playing defense attorney instead of disciple
4. **Domesticating resurrection**: Making it into "hope for improvement"
    - But the martyrs didn't die for that
    - That's Santa Claus, not Saint Nicholas

THE UNCOMFORTABLE CONCLUSION

If Camak is right:

- Most contemporary Christianity is **fundamentally dishonest** about the human condition
- It operates from a Nietzschean baseline while using Christian language
- It's **structurally incapable** of addressing unsolvable suffering without causing harm
- The "successful" aren't blessed—they're **not-yet-fully-crucified**
- The crucified aren't unfortunate—they're **seeing most clearly**

This isn't a gentle correction. It's a **devastating critique** that would require most of Christianity to admit: "We've been doing this backwards. The suffering were right all along."

THE TEST

Camak's theology is **empirically testable**:

Test 1: Next time you encounter someone in profound, unsolvable suffering, try standard Christian comfort ("God has a plan," "this will pass," "have faith"). Watch whether it helps or harms.

Test 2: Next time you face a genuinely unsolvable problem, try the functional-baseline approach (analyze, strategize, fix). Then try the crucifixion-baseline approach (offer it up, be present, ask how to BE). Which allows endurance without despair?

Test 3: Ask yourself: When have I seen most clearly—when things were going well, or when everything fell apart? Which perspective felt more like seeing through illusions?

THE CORE QUESTION YOU CAN'T AVOID

Camak forces you to answer: **Where is the baseline of human experience?**

- With the functional, successful, stable? (Then the suffering are outliers with distorted perspective)
- With the crucified, suffering, broken? (Then the functional are temporarily shielded from reality)

You're choosing whether you realize it or not. And your choice determines:

- Whose testimony counts
- What faithfulness looks like
- Whether your theology can handle unsolvable suffering without causing harm
- Whether you're operating from Christianity or unwitting Nietzscheanism

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PASS IT ON

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The cross does a scandal. It keeps doing it. And there's nothing the SOBs can do about it.

The only true philosophy is a dead man on a tree.

All material drawn from boydcamak.wordpress.com, 2023-2025